

## Using a Story-Based Approach to Teach Grammar

By Bonnie Adair-Hauck, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh). and Richard Donato, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh).<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- deductive and inductive approaches to grammar instruction
- focus on form
- re-conceptualizing grammar instruction
- story-based language learning
- co-constructing grammar explanations
- dialogic grammar explanations
- the PACE Model: Presentation, Attention, Co-Construction, Extension

**Teach and Reflect:** Examining Grammar Presentations in Textbooks; Designing a Story-Based PACE Lesson; Developing a PACE Lesson for the Post-Secondary Level

**Discuss and Reflect:** Contrasting Explanations of Form

### CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

In this chapter, you will explore a dialogic approach to the teaching of grammar using cultural stories as the centerpiece of a lesson in standards-based foreign language instruction. The model that will be presented in this chapter is based on the concept that as learners are guided to reflect on meaningful language form, they develop grammatical concepts in the target language. Additionally, the model of grammatical instruction, referred to as PACE, includes conscious attention to the target language and the need for learners to discuss form from the perspective of meaning and use. Although this shares some similarities with other approaches, it differs in three important ways. First, learners are neither left alone to reflect on form in the input nor are they the passive recipients of “ready-made” grammatical rules. Second, reflecting on form is raised as a topic of conversation in its own right rather than as a mini-lesson during communicative tasks and

activities. Finally, through dialog with the teacher and each other, learners develop grammatical concepts through problem-solving activity where they are asked to reflect upon form and the relationship of forms to meanings that have been established in the context of cultural stories.

Throughout *Teacher's Handbook* so far you have explored how the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (SFL)* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2006) emphasize communication as being at the core of second language learning. You have also learned that communication involves personal expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning where information, feelings, and ideas are exchanged in various forms of human interaction (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Traditional foreign language instruction emphasized the mastery of grammatical rules as the goal of instruction. Unfortunately, as a result, many learners who spent years learning the formal properties of the language (the sound system, verb conjugations, rules of syntax, vocabulary, etc.) were not able to exchange information, participate in target language cultures, or develop and nurture a social relationship in a second language (Adair-Hauck & Cumo-Johanssen, 1997; Barnes, 1992; Hall, 1995, 1999).

Traditional approaches to grammar instruction often involve planning lessons based on the "grammar point of the day" and teaching grammar largely through teacher explanation of grammatical rules. In contrast, the model we propose in this chapter views grammar teaching as a focus on a well-chosen form of language after the meaning of this form has been established in interesting and compelling contexts, such as stories, folktales, and legends. In this model, learners are not required to master all aspects of a grammatical topic (e.g., past tense formation, the French partitive, *ser* vs. *estar*, aspect markers in Chinese) but rather focus solely on the part of the language that is relevant to understand the story and to express opinions, ideas, and feelings about the text. In this way, the language is examined in smaller installments rather than in lists of decontextualized rules and exceptions to these rules characteristic of many textbook grammar presentations.

Teachers who are committed to teaching language for communication often find it difficult to include "grammar instruction" into their curriculum and lessons. The *SFL* stress that knowledge of the language system, including grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and pragmatic and discourse features, contributes to the accuracy of communication. Researchers agree that reflecting on aspects of the language that are relevant to the communication task, or what is referred to as "focus on form," is beneficial to learners and is critical to making progress as language users (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Anton, 1999; Ellis, 1988, 2004; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Herron & Tomasello, 1992; Hinkel & Fotos, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1991; Salaberry, 1997). In contrast to traditional grammar teaching, focus on form largely depends on what learners need for communicative purposes rather than on a predetermined grammatical syllabus. J. Liskin-Gasparro (personal communication, September 15, 1999) illustrates what teachers attempt to do when they focus students' attention on form for purposes of communication. She states that teachers are "supplying information about how the language works when one or more students experience what we might call communicative urgency, a need to say something and, thus, a desire for grammatical information."

From this perspective, focus on form can emerge spontaneously as learners need to understand language to express themselves and deepen their comprehension of texts. In addition to spontaneous focus on form, teachers can also draw students' attention to form when the form is particularly relevant to the context of the lesson. The model presented in this chapter allows for both types of focus on form to occur. In summary, in this chapter the term *grammar instruction* will be used to refer to a focus on a particular form of language that is relevant to the context, such as a cultural story, and essential to developing the ability to make meaning in the foreign language.



“Focus on form” largely depends on what learners need for communication purposes rather than on a predetermined grammatical syllabus. ■

Ellis (2008) points out that there is now widespread acceptance that acquisition requires learners to attend to form. However, learning grammatical structures apart from their use and function is pointless unless one wants to be a linguist or describe a language systematically without becoming a communicatively competent user of that language (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Like road signs, grammatical structures take on meaning only if they are situated within a context, within people, and within connected discourse. They become internalized only if the learners are placed in a situation in which they need to use the structures for communication and participation in communicative events (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002; DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996; Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Salaberry, 1997; Shaffer, 1989; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). Thus, an important role of the language teacher is to create learning situations in which students perceive how grammar can be used to comprehend and interpret the target language and how to use grammar in meaningful exchanges. In other words, learners need to understand how grammar will enable them to become better meaning makers.

## The Deductive and Inductive Dichotomy

---

Although many researchers agree on the benefits of some grammar instruction, the term “teaching grammar” has a variety of meanings (Ellis, 2008). Most applied linguists agree that *deductive* and *inductive* approaches are the two predominant types of grammar instruction in classrooms today. Other language teaching specialists include the use of tasks where learners are directed to pay attention to preselected forms or preplanned forms to complete tasks successfully. Despite this ostensibly neatly organized view of grammar teaching, deductive and inductive approaches to learning represent two dichotomous perspectives on how grammar is taught and learned. On the *deductive* side of the dichotomy is explicit grammar instruction that involves teacher explanations of rules followed by related manipulative exercises intended to practice the new structure. The expected outcome of a deductive approach is that students learn the designated forms of the language, so that later they will be able to perform selected communicative or meaning-making activities. In this paradigm, structures and grammar are viewed as *a priori* knowledge that will enable the learner to eventually communicate (Hopper & Thompson, 1993; Mantero, 2002; Van Patten, 1998).

Many language learners have experienced the deductive approach of grammar instruction. Most textbooks still present grammar explanations in this fashion, followed by manipulative drills that are cast in shallow and artificial contexts unrelated to the real communicative intentions of learners (Aski, 2003; Walz, 1989). Thus, these practice opportunities are often meaningless to learners and are not capable of engaging their language problem-solving skills and their desire to communicate using the forms they are learning (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Brooks & Donato, 1994). It is common for teachers to observe that these artificial opportunities for practice after the teacher’s grammatical explanation is delivered often result in unmotivated and lethargic responses in learners, no matter how much context is given in the directions or how much personalization is provided.

A possible explanation for these disappointing results from a deductive approach to grammar instruction is that it invests the teacher with the responsibility for understanding and constructing grammatical knowledge and, consequently, assigns a passive role to the learners. Learner interaction takes place, if it occurs at all, only after the teacher’s

grammatical explanations and practice exercises consisting of disconnected sentences unrelated to an overall theme. Additionally, a deductive approach to grammar teaching has the disadvantage of requiring learners to focus on grammatical forms before experiencing their meaning and function in a communicative encounter (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). This linear model of teaching a form before using a form has distinct disadvantages and does not support learning grammatical knowledge. When learners are presented with ready-made explanations of grammar by the teacher, they are denied the opportunity to explore and construct for themselves an understanding of the form; predictably, they do not perceive a valid reason for learning the particular grammar point no matter how skilled at explanation the teacher is or how succinctly a grammatical feature is presented in a rule-based formula. Moreover, when learners are presented with ready-made explanations of grammar by the teacher, they are denied the opportunity to explore, problem-solve and construct for themselves an understanding of the form, and they do not perceive a valid reason for learning the particular grammar point. As we learned in Chapter 1, sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) reminds us that it is dialogic, joint problem solving that leads to cognitive development.



What is deductive grammar instruction? Why does it appeal to some educators? What are its disadvantages?

On the other side of the instructional dichotomy is the *inductive* grammar approach. The inductive approach, as presented by Krashen (1985), Terrell (1977), and Dulay and Burt (1973), rejects the need for any explicit focus on form. Proponents of inductive teaching argue that learners can acquire language naturally if they are provided with sufficient comprehensible input from the teacher. Furthermore, the approach maintains that grammatical development follows its own natural internal syllabus; thus, any explicit teaching of form is pointless and not worth the instructional time and effort of the teacher and the students. If learners are exposed to a sufficient amount of language that interests them and is globally understandable to them, they will eventually be able to induce how the structures of the language work. As the theory goes, learners should be able to perform hypothesizing and language analysis on their own as comprehensible input becomes intake.

However, research has shown that some learners do not attend to or “induce” the teacher’s preselected grammatical point on the basis of input alone. One reason for this may be that the implicit approach clearly places little importance on mediating the students’ understanding of the grammatical feature in question, reducing the teacher to a provider of input rather than of responsive instructional assistance. Herron and Tomasello (1992) also state that the inductive approach cannot guarantee that the learner will discover the underlying concepts or that the induced grammatical concepts will actually be correct. In the research of Adair-Hauck (1993), it was found that when learners were asked about their emerging understandings and self-generated “discoveries” about form, they often had inaccurate or partial understandings of the grammatical concept. Additionally, some students failed to perceive the grammatical pattern that the teacher presented even when the structure was embedded in a meaningful context and made salient through repetitions in the input. Even in the studies of input enhancement, where the target form is highlighted or manipulated in some way to draw the individual learner’s attention to the target form, findings of successful outcomes are inconsistent. Furthermore, the inductive approach can frustrate adolescent or adult learners, many of whom have already become analytical with regard to the rules that govern their native languages. These learners often want to hasten the learning process by consciously comparing and contrasting their own native language rules to the rules that govern the new target language.



What is the inductive grammar instructional approach? What are its advantages? What are some disadvantages?

## Reconceptualizing Grammar Instruction

Although deductive and inductive grammar instruction are clearly opposite approaches to teaching and learning grammar, they share some notable deficiencies. Neither approach acknowledges the critical role of the teacher in mediating understandings of how the new language works, and neither acknowledges the contributions and backgrounds that the learners bring to the instructional setting for collaborating with the teacher on constructing a grammatical explanation (Donato & Adair-Hauck, 1992). Moreover, neither approach recognizes the social aspects of learning that take place routinely among people in the world, outside of the classroom. In deductive and inductive approaches, learning is seen as exclusively located in the individual rather than situated in the dialogic interactions between them. A sociocultural approach to instruction (see Chapter 1) indicates that learning is an emerging, social, and interactive process situated in cultural contexts, such as schools and classrooms, and assisted through tools, the most notable being language. Therefore, theory and research have provided two dichotomous approaches to learning and processing grammatical information, both of which fail to take into account the collaborative, dialogic, and social aspects of learning (Adair-Hauck, 1993, 2007; Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994, 2002; Donato, 2004). Neither approach recognizes the dialogic interactions that are fundamental to learning as it occurs naturally between humans in everyday life (Adair-Hauck, 1993, Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Donato, 2004; Forman, Minnick, & Stone, 1993; John-Steiner, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Stone, 1993; Wenger, 1998).

In this chapter, we advocate a story-based and dialogic approach (Adair-Hauck, 1993; Donato & Adair-Hauck, 1992) that contrasts with both the traditional deductive approach and the inductive approach to learning. This dialogic approach allows teachers and students to build understandings of form as they are encountered in meaningful contexts. It must be pointed out, however, that a dialogic co-constructed approach to grammar instruction does not assume that students must reinvent or discover the generalizations about grammar that we already know (Karpov, 2003; Negueruela & Lantolf, 2005). Conversely, this approach also recognizes, as Vygotsky (1986) has pointed out in his theories of concept formation, that concepts—and we include here grammatical concepts—cannot be given to learners ready-made and that they are subject to continual revision and development. A dialogic approach can reconcile the polarized views of grammar teaching, as shown in Figure 7.1. For a number of reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter, we believe that a dialogic approach embedded in the use of meaningful contexts found in compelling and interesting stories might hold the key to dramatic improvements in the acquisition of grammar.

**FIGURE 7.1** A Dialogic Story-Based Approach to Grammar Instruction

INDUCTIVE APPROACH	DIALOGIC APPROACH	DEDUCTIVE APPROACH
Learners analyze the grammar explanation for themselves.	Teacher and learners collaborate on and co-construct the grammar explanation.	Teachers provide explanation for learners

Source: Adapted from *A Descriptive Analysis of a Whole Language/Guided Participatory versus Explicit Teaching Strategies in Foreign Language Instruction* (p. 6), by B. Adair-Hauck, 1993. Used by permission of the author.

## Basic Principles of Dialogic Story-Based Language Teaching

Before discussing some practical applications of this approach, we present the rationale for a story-based and dialogic approach to focus on form. It is said that the whole is always viewed as being greater than the sum of its parts, and it is the whole that gives meaning to the parts (Vygotsky, 1978). Words, phrases, or sentences are not linguistic islands unto themselves. On the contrary, these linguistic elements gain meaning and function—for example, giving advice on good eating habits to a friend using the subjunctive in French, Spanish, or Italian—only when they are placed in context and in a whole text. In this example, the use of the subjunctive takes on meaning and is used for a function in the whole context of giving advice. Compare this to simply giving students a deductive explanation of the subjunctive, which does not situate its use and fails to illustrate how the form is used to make meaning in the language, resulting in a decontextualized academic exercise in language analysis rather than language use.

If words only take on their meaning and function when used in connection to each other, learners need to encounter grammar in action in contextualized language and connected discourse (e.g., stories, legends, poems, listening selections, cartoons, songs, recipes). Emphasis needs to be placed on meaning-making and sense-making before a focus on form can be a productive instructional activity. In this way, a story-based language approach stresses connected discourse and encourages learners to comprehend meaningful texts from the very beginning of the lesson. As learners comprehend meaningful texts (e.g., stories), the forms of the language take on meaning and their uses become transparent. Once learners understand the meaning of the whole text, they will be better able to focus on and understand the contribution of the parts of the text to the meaning of the whole (Adair-Hauck & Cumo-Johanssen, 1997; Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Hughes & McCarthy, 1998).



A story-based language approach stresses connected discourse and encourages learners to comprehend meaningful texts from the very beginning of the lesson.

By introducing a lesson with a whole text, the teacher uses the grammatical feature in a meaningful way by making obvious the meaning and function of the grammar structure to be taught. In this way, the teacher foreshadows the conversation about grammar that will occur after comprehension of the meaning of the feature has been achieved. Galloway and Labarca (1990) explain how foreshadowing of new language elements is beneficial: It provides “learners with a ‘feel’ for what is to come and can help learners cast forward a familiarity net by which aspects of language prompt initial recognition and later, gradually, are pulled into the learner’s productive repertoire” (p. 136). The story or text highlights the functional significance of the grammatical structure before learners’ attention is focused on the systematic grammatical features of the specific form. This approach is also in agreement with Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian’s (1968) idea of using advance organizers to assist learners, providing an “anchoring framework” for the new concepts to be learned; in this approach, the story “anchors” the new structure.

Unlike many classroom textbooks, which may offer a group of disconnected sentences or a “contextualized” drill (Walz, 1989), a story-based approach invites the learner to comprehend and experience the meaning and function of grammar through integrated discourse in the form of a story. The process of understanding a story in a foreign language also creates a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (see Chapter 1) where responsive assistance is provided and target language development occurs. As a result, from the very beginning of the lesson, the teacher and learners are engaged in authentic use of language through joint problem-solving activities and interactions to render the

story comprehensible. By using simplified language, pictures, and gestures, the teacher scaffolds (see Chapter 1) and guides learners to comprehend the story. Once comprehension is achieved, the teacher can then productively turn the learners' attention to various linguistic elements previously encountered and anchored in the narrative.



Foreshadowing of new language elements provides learners with a “feel” for what is to come.

## Why Use Stories?

Many specialists in first language literacy development have explored the implications of story-based teaching and narrative ways of knowing for quite some time. The rationale for storytelling is multifaceted. Storytelling is an ancient human pastime, often used to entertain, to explain the human condition, and to share an aesthetic experience through expressive language (Pellowski, 1984). Furthermore, storytelling is a natural activity that is socially mediated on a daily basis outside the walls of the classroom. Cross-culturally, there is a deep need for human beings to exchange and tell stories (Morgan & Rinvolucris, 1983). Likewise, research in sociocultural theory has turned attention to the importance of collaborative interaction in several academic disciplines. In an effort to situate grammar instruction in sociocultural theory, we will discuss the principles of a story-based approach to grammar instruction, and then present how to use collaborative dialogic problem solving in a story-based lesson to enhance the learning and use of grammar.

Storytelling is particularly adaptable to second language instruction, since it is natural to tell stories orally, interpret their contents, and extend the story in various ways (e.g., talk about favorite parts, speculate on why an event occurred, express personal opinions about a character). Oller (1983) states that the episodic organization represented in stories aids comprehension and retention. Since individuals have prior knowledge concerning how stories are structured and expectancies about what should take place in stories, their comprehension is facilitated and meaning is established. Furthermore, using “multiple passes” and recycling the storyline through picture displays, Total Physical Response (TPR) activities, and role-playing scenarios deepen comprehension. The framework of the story provides a flow of mental images that help the learners to assign meaning and functions to the forms they hear. After these initial activities and interactions have helped learners to understand the meaning of the discourse, the teacher turns learners' attention to specific language forms or structures. This approach is in agreement with Celce-Murcia's suggestion concerning grammar instruction for ESL learners, that “one of the best times for them [the learners] to attend to form is after comprehension has been achieved and in conjunction with their production of meaningful discourse” (1985, p. 301).



“One of the best times for them [the learners] to attend to form is after comprehension has been achieved and in conjunction with their production of meaningful discourse.”



Which elements of the story-based approach make it appealing?

## A Model for Dialoguing about Form in a Story-Based Language Approach

Language teaching should never be driven by grammar instruction alone, nor should grammar instruction be literally interpreted to mean instruction on morphology



(e.g., adjective or subject-verb agreement, rules for pluralization, etc.) or meaningless, decontextualized manipulation of forms. When the teacher or students focus on form, attention is drawn to the formal properties of the language, which include its sound system, word formation, syntax, discourse markers, and devices for relating one sentence to another, to name a few. Additionally, focus on form needs to include how grammatical forms function in texts. That is, to know only how to form a grammatical structure will never enable learners to use the structure for meaning-making. Therefore, the issue is not whether a teacher should focus on form; instead, the issue is how, when, and where to focus on form in a lesson that will ultimately clarify this important design feature of foreign language instruction. The PACE model for grammar instruction presented below is a way for learners to develop concepts about target language structures that includes form and focus. This approach also challenges teachers to reflect upon their own grammatical understandings and learn new ways of viewing grammar functionally beyond rules of word formation. For example, although language teachers are well aware of how comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are formed (e.g., place *plus* before the adjective in French followed by *que*), explaining how and why comparatives and superlatives are used and how their meanings differ is often rather difficult for teachers to articulate. Why a particular grammatical choice is made rather than selecting another form from a large set of possibilities is at the crux of what it means to know grammar.

## The PACE Approach

The following four sections present PACE, a model for contextualizing lessons with learners about language form in the context of interesting cultural texts. *PACE* (Donato & Adair-Hauck, 1994) is an acronym for the four steps we have developed for integrating focus on form in the context of a story-based unit of study. The PACE model should be viewed as the framework for a unit of study that is carried out in multiple lessons over several days. In addition to the opportunities for developing cultural understandings, rich vocabulary, and modes of communication, the PACE model also allows for learners to construct understandings of relevant and meaningful form in collaboration with the teacher and each other. This approach, as will be illustrated below, contrasts sharply with deductive teacher explanation of grammar and inductive approaches that assume that all structures can be analyzed by students on their own, solely on the basis of the input they hear.

## P: PRESENTATION of Meaningful Language

This first step of PACE represents the “whole” language being presented in a thematic way. It can be an interesting story (folktales and legends work well), a TPR lesson, an authentic listening segment, an authentic document, or a demonstration of a real-life, authentic task, such as playing a sport, making a sandwich, or conducting a science experiment. Even materials from a textbook chapter (narratives, dialogues, stories) may be used if they are found to be interesting and episodically organized. Episodically organized stories include stageable actions and events that are well-suited for presentation, since the meanings of these texts can be made transparent and comprehensible through dramatization, actions, or TPR storytelling. Given that this text will be foreshadowing a future grammar conversation, the grammatical feature should be well-represented in the text and used meaningfully throughout the story.

In the Presentation phase, the teacher presents the story orally, which facilitates aural comprehension and the acquisition of meaning and form; students do not see the written script of the story in this phase. The Presentation does not consist of isolated, disconnected sentences illustrating the target form in question; rather, it is presented in



a narrative intended to capture learner interest and provide opportunities for the teacher to create comprehension through various meaning-making and negotiation strategies (see Chapter 1). Care should also be taken to ensure that the presentation adequately illustrates the structure in question and that the story and target structure are appropriate to the learners' actual and potential levels of development, as instruction in the ZPD suggests. The structure should appear often enough during the Presentation to be salient to learners, without making the language sound unnatural or stilted (see suggestions on creating a storytelling lesson below). Many stories contain *naturally occurring repetitions*; for example, think of the fairytale Goldilocks and the Three Bears and the natural repetitions of certain grammatical features that occur in the story.

The Presentation should also be interactive. By creating student participation in the storytelling event, teachers can guide learners through the new element of the language to be learned. Student participation during the presentation of the text may take the form of learner repetitions of key phrases cued by the teacher during a storytelling session, the use of student actors to portray the events of the story as it is told, cloze exercises based on listening segments, K-W-L activities,<sup>2</sup> or questions that ask students to anticipate what will happen next. The goal here is to enable learners to stretch their language abilities by comprehending new elements of the target language in meaningful texts, through the mediation of the teacher during storytelling.

The Presentation phase may last for part of a class, an entire class session, or even across several class sessions, depending on the story selected and the sequencing of its presentation. For example, a storytelling lesson should be planned using a three-part design involving pre-storytelling, while-storytelling, and post-storytelling activities. These three design features may include focusing on prior knowledge, content, cultural references, key vocabulary, dramatization, pair-work comprehension checks, or story-retelling exercises. The length of time required ultimately depends on the nature of the story, its length, and the amount of negotiation work required to establish meaning. See below for more suggestions on designing and delivering the presentation phase of PACE.



In the Presentation phase, the teacher presents the story orally, which facilitates aural comprehension and the acquisition of meaning and form; students do not see the written script of the story in this phase.

## A: ATTENTION

This second PACE step focuses learners' attention on some aspect of the language used during the Presentation. In the Presentation phase, language is transparent and students may not notice important aspects of the language that will help them progress in proficiency. The Attention phase takes place after the class has understood the story and is ready to move to a conversation about an important grammatical feature of the story. Thus, in this phase, the teacher highlights the grammatical feature of the language to be discussed. Highlighting can be achieved in several ways. Teachers can ask questions about patterns found in the text or about words and phrases repeated in a story. Overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations of example sentences from the Presentation story can be prepared, with important words and phrases circled or underlined. The point of this step is to help learners to focus attention on the target form without needless elaboration or wasted time.

The important purpose of this step is to ensure that learners are focused on the grammatical element chosen for discussion, which is, after all, the original purpose of following the PACE model. Recall that research has shown that learners do not always process or attend to input in ways that we expect (Herron & Tomasello, 1992). Adair-Hauck

(1993) found that when learners were presented with contextualized sentences (examples taken from the “Le lion et la souris” story with sentences both in the present and in the past using the new past-tense verb form) and were asked by the teacher what they noticed about these sentences, the learners were unable to answer. Instead, they responded with puzzled looks. However, when the teacher provided responsive and graduated assistance and included the words *aujourd’hui* (today) and *hier* (yesterday), which are semantic, not syntactic, clues, learners were able to articulate the differences in the meanings of the sentences. After paying attention to the *semantic clues* (focus on meaning), the learners were able to attend to the *syntactic clues* (focus on form). This classroom-based observation highlights the role of the teacher in guiding and assisting the learners in attending to the lesson objective and the importance of focusing on meaning before form.

It should also be pointed out that learners might show curiosity about certain aspects of the language. That is, if teachers are truly in the ZPD of the learners, they will be attentive to where their students’ development is headed and not just the lesson objective as determined by the teacher. In addition to having clear goals and outcomes for the lesson, teachers should allow for the possibility that the grammatical agenda may be set by students when their curiosity about the language emerges. By assessing whether attention was drawn to a particular structure and what structures students express interest in understanding more about, the teacher can determine aspects of the language that were not transparent and need clarification. In summary, the Attention phase recognizes that joint attention between teacher and student needs to be established in order for learning to occur. Joint attention to specific grammatical features of the language can be established explicitly and directly through various mediational means, such as printed text with enhancements or questions that direct attention.



If teachers are truly in the ZPD of the learners, they will be attentive to where their students’ development is headed and not just the lesson objective as determined by the teacher.

## C: CO-CONSTRUCT—Explanation as Conversation

Learners and teachers should be co-constructors of grammatical explanations. Co-construction involves collaborative talk between the teacher and the students to reflect on, hypothesize about, and create understandings about the form, meaning, and function of the new structure in question. This phase occurs after joint focus of attention on the target form is achieved. At this step, the teacher assists learners in developing a concept of the target structure and enables them to contrast the structure with what they already know. This phase directly addresses the Comparisons goal area, at a time when language comparisons are appropriate and can be discussed in a meaningful context. During this conversation about form and meaning, learners are guided to hypothesize, make predictions, and come to generalizations about the target form, all higher-order thinking skills requiring observation, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis.

One way to begin a conversation where grammatical knowledge is co-constructed is to ask questions. Co-constructing an explanation requires teacher questions that are well-chosen, clear, and direct. Questions are powerful tools in the hands of teachers who can adjust their questioning “in flight” to meet the emergent understandings of their learners. For example, asking learners questions such as, “What words do you hear or see repeated in the text, and what could they mean?”, “What pattern do you see in this group of words?”, and “How do certain words change as their meanings change?” is a way to help learners draw insights from the language. These assisting questions (see Chapter 1) help learners discover regular grammatical patterns, sound systems, word order, unique

cultural meanings of words, and grammatical functions. Additionally, questions cannot be predicted in advance and need to be contingent upon learner contributions. Learners should also be encouraged to ask the teacher and each other questions, if the explanation is to be truly co-constructed. As learners hypothesize and generalize about the target form, teachers build upon and extend learners' knowledge without overwhelming them with superfluous grammatical detail. Hypothesis testing can also be conducted, with teachers leading learners in trying out their new knowledge by applying their generalizations to new situations. Teachers need to be aware that the help they provide is graduated and may range from brief hints about the target form to explicit instruction if needed (Aljaafreh, 1992; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994).

It is important to note that, unlike guided induction techniques, which rely primarily on teacher questioning, a co-constructed explanation is not an inquisition; instead, co-constructed explanations recognize that learners may not be able to perceive the formal properties of language on the basis of the teacher's questions alone. Just as in conversation in everyday life, one individual does not interrogate another in a barrage of questions. What is obvious to the teacher is often a mystery to the novice. A co-constructed explanation is as participatory for the teacher as it is for the learners; that is, teachers need to assess the abilities of their learners and assist them by providing and eliciting information when necessary. Teachers can be conversation partners and offer their own observations, thereby modeling for the students the process of reflecting on language forms. As Sharp and Gallimore (1988) point out, teaching is responsive assistance and cannot be reduced to a series of actions (such as questions) to be performed in the same order in every instructional circumstance. By listening closely to learner contributions during this step, teachers can assess how much help is needed to attain the concept. Over time, learners will develop the ability to reflect on language on their own and some learners may be able to work in small groups on grammar problems and report back to the class about their observations and hypotheses (Fotos & Ellis, 1991).

The use of English for co-construction of grammatical knowledge may be necessary, depending on the level of the class and the structure under investigation. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that beginning language students can analyze language and arrive at generalizations in the target language. It is common to observe, however, that when students reflect on language form, they do so in their native language (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Brooks, Donato, & McGlone, 1997; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). However, if the grammatical conversation can be simplified—and this simplification would be largely determined on the basis of the structure being discussed and the level of the class—then the use of the target language may be possible and useful. As students progress, the teacher should be attentive to changes in students' language and observational abilities and determine if the co-construction can take place in the target language.

In summary, a conversation about grammar involves both teacher and students in discussion about the grammatical form focused upon in the Attention step of the PACE lesson. The purpose of the conversation is neither to engage in a didactic presentation of the form by the teacher (deductive approach) nor require the students to discover the grammatical concept on their own (inductive approach). Rather, teachers elicit students' observations, understandings, and misunderstandings and respond with their own observations or assisting questions. Finally, teachers need to understand grammar in a new manner to help students observe the meaning-making potential of the forms they are learning. This means that simply thinking that the students' ability to explicitly recite a textbook grammar rule is equal to knowing how to use this rule is misguided. Rather, teachers need to move students to understand how grammar functions in spoken and written texts, such as stories, so that they understand why certain grammatical choices were made over others and how they might use grammar for their own communicative purposes.

To conclude this section, the following example of a grammar conversation between a teacher and her first-year French class illustrates how the teacher skillfully manages the conversation about comparative forms of adjectives in French. In this dialogic encounter, the teacher moves students from a superficial observation about word placement to a conceptual understanding that links the formation of adjectives with their functional significance.



Co-constructing an explanation requires teacher questions that are well-chosen, clear, and direct.

## Dialoguing About Grammar: A Co-constructed Grammar Lesson

The teacher has just presented the authentic French folktale of a curious boy who asks what parts of nature are stronger than other parts (e.g., Is the mountain stronger than the wind?). The following day the teacher reviews the contents of the story, provides a printed text of the story, and distributes the text to the class. The teacher's goal for one part of this class is to call attention to the form of the French comparative (*plus + adj + que*), its meaning (superiority of one item over another), and its use (describe and compare two things where one is greater than the other). Then the teacher assists students to engage in *self-explanation* of this form through a conversation about the comparative as it is used in the story. Note the *instructional moves* and the critical thinking that takes place about language form, meaning, and use.

### ATTENTION PHASE OF LESSON: FOCUS ON FORM

T: Look at the text of the story. Do you see any phrase that is repeated?

S: Yes, there's *PLUS FORT*.

T: Is this all? Look again, I see another word.

S: *QUE*.

T: So what is the phrase that is repeated?

S: *PLUS FORT QUE*.

### Co-construction of Grammatical Concept Phase: Form-Meaning Connections

T: OK, look at these sentences. [Teacher writes on board LE CHAT EST PLUS FORT QUE LE RAT. LE ROCHER EST PLUS FORT QUE LE BATEAU. LE BATEAU EST PLUS FORT QUE LA MER.]

T: And what's before *PLUS* and after *QUE* in the first sentence?

S: *LE CHAT* before *QUE* and *LE RAT* after *QUE*.

T: So what is the relationship between the cat and the rat?

S: (Confused . . . no response)

T: Well, what do we know about the cat and the rat in this sentence?

How are they described? I see the word *FORT*, which means the cat and the rat are strong. But are they the same?

S: No, the cat is stronger than the rat.

T: The cat is stronger than the rat. OK, but how do you know this? What is in the sentence that tells you the cat is stronger than the rat is?

S: *PLUS*

T: Just *PLUS*?

S: *PLUS FORT QUE*

T: Yes, all the words tell you this, not just one word. Can we say the same about the rock and the boat?

S: Yes, they also have *PLUS FORT QUE* . . .

T: So when you see *PLUS* and a word that describes (an adjective) and a *QUE*, what does the sentence mean?

S: Means one thing is more than the other, like stronger.

T: And when would you use a sentence like the sentences on the board?

S: When you tell a story?

T: Well, yes, to tell a story, but what kind of story? Why are you using *PLUS + ADJECTIVE + QUE*? Why not just use the adjective *FORT* and not use *PLUS . . . QUE*?

S: Because you're comparing two things.

T: OK, yes. We use this kind of sentence to describe and compare two things. Anyone want to try to explain the meaning of the comparison? Are the two things equal? (teacher writes = on the board)

S: No, one is more than the other. Not equal.

T: So if you want to *describe* two things and *compare* these two things and one is superior to the other, how do you make a sentence like this in French?

S: You say the first thing, then say it is *PLUS + description (adjective)*, then use *QUE* and say the second thing.

T: Do you all agree with this explanation? (Everyone says yes.) We can try it with some other descriptions and comparisons. Let's see if our generalization works. Let's compare these two things.

Eiffel Tower and our school building

Porsche and Ford

Pennsylvania and California (etc.)

T: OK, take 3 minutes and write your explanation for describing and comparing two things in your notebooks. Tonight, read your textbook explanation about this and see if the textbook gives the same explanation as you. [Teacher then assigns homework using the comparative structure, which moves the PACE lesson into Extension phase.]

Homework: Write a paragraph describing two people or things of your choice and compare them in five different ways. Tomorrow we will see if the class can guess how you compared your two people or objects. You will then present your comparison to the class.

## E: EXTENSION Activities

Focus on form is only useful if it can be pressed into service by the learners in a new way at a later time. In story-based language teaching, the teacher never loses sight of the "whole." Therefore, the Extension activity phase of PACE provides learners with the opportunity to use their new grammar skill in creative and interesting ways while at the

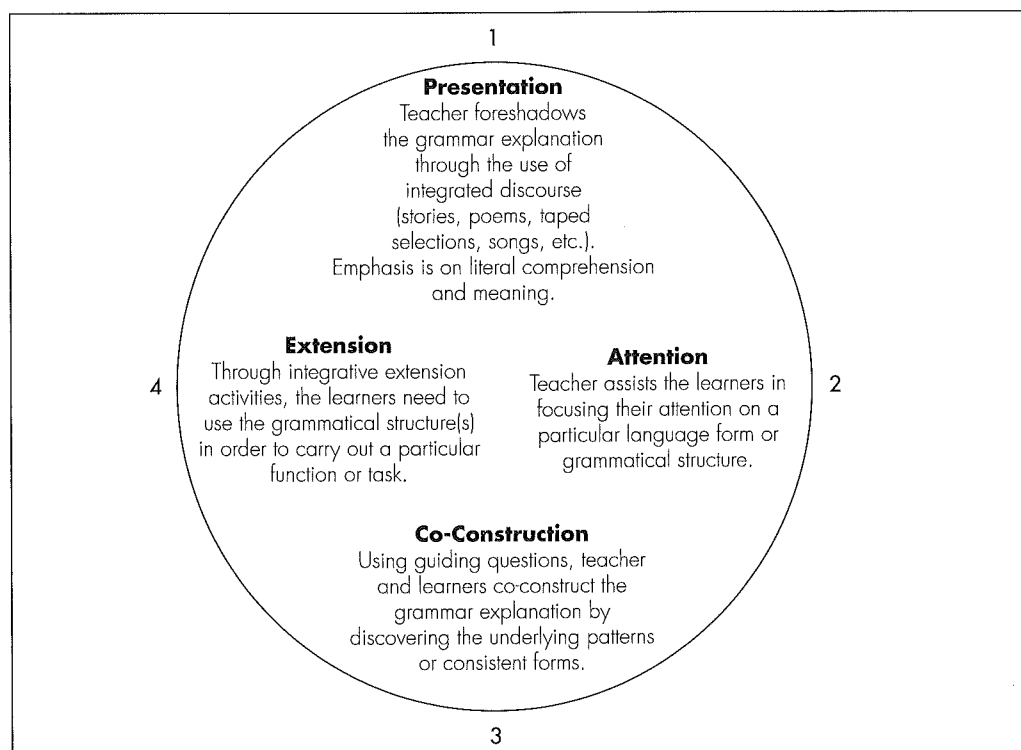
same time integrating it into existing knowledge. Extension activities should be interesting, be related to the theme of the lesson in some way, and, most importantly, allow for creative self-expression. Extension activities are not worksheets on which learners use the target form to fill in blanks of disconnected sentences; instead, they can be information-gap activities, role-play situations, dramatizations, games, authentic writing projects, paired interviews, class surveys, out-of-class projects, or simulations of real-life situations (see Chapter 8). The possibilities are endless, as long as the learners have the chance to try to use the target form in ways that they see as useful, meaningful, and connected to the overarching theme of the lesson. Moreover, the Extension phase of the lesson allows the teacher to address other goal areas of the standards, such as Cultures, Communities, and Connections: The Extension activities can address cultural perspectives embodied in the story (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002; West & Donato, 1995), bring learners into contact with target language members of the community for further investigations of the story's country of origin, or link the story's theme to an academic subject area.

The Extension activity phase closes the circle of the PACE lesson and puts the "whole" back into story-based language teaching (see Figure 7.2). As is the case in the Presentation phase, the Extension phase can take several days as students are engaged in multiple communicative and interpersonal activities.



The Extension activity phase closes the circle of the PACE lesson and puts the "whole" back into story-based language teaching.

**FIGURE 7.2** A Story-Based Approach to Language Instruction and Focus on Form



Source: From "PACE: A model to focus on form," by R. Donato and B. Adair-Hauck, 1994. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Used by permission of Bonnie Adair-Hauck.

## Elements of Story-Based Language Learning

Figure 7.3 summarizes the differences between a story-based language approach and the traditional deductive approach to teaching grammar. The earlier discussion should have led you to the conclusion that language learning is a thinking process. Teachers need to manage cognitively demanding conversations about grammar and extension activities that will encourage learners to hypothesize, predict, take risks, make errors, and self-correct (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). By doing so, learners become active participants in the learning process. All the story-based activities described later in this chapter have a common denominator—they all encourage learners to be active thinkers and hypothesizers as they collaborate in conversations about language and language learning activities with the teacher or with their peers.

Whether listening to a storytelling activity, co-constructing a grammar explanation, or collaborating with peers during an extension activity, learners are actively discovering and hypothesizing about the target language. This approach reflects the framework of the Communication goal area of *SFL*, which advocates that learners be engaged in cognitively challenging activities that encourage them to use communication strategies, such as guessing intelligently, deriving meaning from context, asking for and providing clarification, making and checking hypotheses, and making inferences, predictions, and generalizations. Moreover, all of the classroom activities described encourage functional and interactional use of language by giving learners opportunities to share information, ask questions, and solve problems collaboratively.

**FIGURE 7.3** Teaching of Grammar: A Story-Based PACE Approach vs. Traditional Approach

STORY-BASED PACE APPROACH	TRADITIONAL APPROACH
1. Use of higher-level thinking skills and language before moving to procedural skills	1. Sequencing of tasks from simple to complex
2. Instructional interaction between Teacher ("expert") and Learners ("novices")	2. Little teacher/learner interaction; teacher-directed explanation
3. Dialogic co-constructed explanation	3. Explicit explanation of grammar
4. Encourages performance before competence (approximations encouraged).	4. Learner must master each step before going to next step (competence before performance).
5. Learners participate in problem-solving process and higher-order thinking skills (opportunity for learners' actions to be made meaningful).	5. Learners are passive and rarely participate in constructing the explanation.
6. Language and especially questions must be suitably turned to a level at which performance requires assistance.	6. Few questions—mainly rhetorical
7. Lesson operationalizes functional significance of grammatical structure before mechanical procedures take place.	7. The functional significance of a grammatical point often does not emerge until end of lesson.

Source: From "PACE: A model to focus on form," by R. Donato and B. Adair-Hauck, 1994, p. 20. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Used by permission of Bonnie Adair-Hauck.





Finally, a distinguishing theme of a dialogic story-based approach to grammar instruction is that learning needs to be integrated, contextualized, and meaning-centered (Pearson, 1989). In Appendices 7.1.0 to 7.1.14 on the *Teacher's Handbook* Web site, we have included a sample story-based language lesson to teach the past definite in French with *avoir* (story suggested and edited by Terry [1986] and based on a well-known Aesop's fable). The lesson begins with a story, "The Lion and the Mouse" ("Le lion et la souris"), which foreshadows the functional significance of the grammar point. All of the subsequent classroom activities—for example, role-playing, paired activities to retell the story, and team activities using graphic organizers—are contextualized and relate to the theme of "The Lion and the Mouse." In this way, the unit is contextualized and integrated, which enables the instructional events to flow naturally. As noted earlier, integrated and meaning-centered activities facilitate comprehension and retention on the part of learners. Furthermore, the extension activities encourage learners to integrate meaning, form, and function while experiencing language in context.

It should be mentioned that creating integrated and meaning-centered activities is probably one of the most difficult aspects of story-based language teaching, since many textbooks still stress context-reduced practice and fragmented materials. The following activities will provide you with suggestions on how to incorporate integrated and story-based language activities into your classroom. See the View and Reflect section of the *Teacher's Handbook* Web site for a video of a lesson that has features of the PACE approach.



How does a dialogic story-based approach lead to language learning?

### Suggestions for Selecting, Preparing, Designing, and Delivering a Story-Based Language Lesson

Actualizing a PACE lesson will enable the teacher to transform the classroom into a socially mediated environment where the teacher and learners co-construct meaning of "texts" (stories, poems, songs, etc.) from the beginning of the lesson. In particular, we suggest embedding stories (fables, legends, fairytales, etc.) into your lesson plans. Integrating story-based activities enables the teacher to create a meaning-making classroom that parallels the home or out-of-school environment. This explains why first language reading and language arts programs value story-based language learning. Golden (2000) explains: "Like homes, libraries, book clubs, workplaces and many other social contexts, classrooms are special places where human beings interact with stories, story-based tasks, and with each other to make meaning" (p. 4).

**Selecting an Appropriate Text.** One of the first steps in designing a story-based lesson is selecting an appropriate text for learners and for your instructional purposes. Text selection is not an easy task, given the many texts that exist, their contents, and their complexity. Interactive storytelling, rather than "story-reading," is an excellent way to make use of the myriad stories that exist in target language cultures. Through storytelling, natural simplifications can occur, and teachers can shape the story to be within learners' ZPDs. The following are guiding principles for selecting a good text for a PACE lesson:

1. Do you like the text and find it appealing?
2. Will the learners enjoy the story you selected? Is it an age-appropriate story dealing with issues, experiences, and themes that reflect the lives of your learners? Does the story incite imagination or reflection?
3. Does the story lend itself to "stageable actions"?

4. Does the story suggest connections to academic content?
5. Does the story represent some aspect of the target culture that you will address?
6. Does the story present stereotypes or reasonable and fair depictions of the target language culture?
7. Is the language accessible or can it be made accessible through storytelling simplifications to the learners' current stage of linguistic development?
8. Is the theme of the story one that can be expanded upon and extended into various activities?
9. Does the story adequately represent a grammatical structure on which you will later focus?
10. Does the story lend itself to addressing some of the goal areas of the *SFLI*?

One of the best places to find stories is in the children's section of a large public library. Many libraries have well-illustrated children's books (folktales, fairytales, fables, myths, legends, humorous tales, tall tales) in different languages. Folktales seem to work particularly well, since they were originally created to be delivered orally in a cultural context, and they have withstood the test of time (Seeley, 1993). The Internet is also a rich source of authentic stories in your target language. However, when using the Internet, or when searching materials marketed by publishers of second language materials, remember that an authentic story is one written by a member of the target language community for purposes other than language instruction. Usually, the writer's motivation is to tell an interesting tale, entertain, explain the human condition, or illustrate a moral or theme (Pellowski, 1984). Some Web sites and second language material developers offer texts that do not follow the above criteria. For example, some stories are translations containing illustrations and cultural references that have not been modified to match the cultures of the language into which the story has been translated. Many of these stories would never be read by members of the target culture. Unfortunately, the major goal of some material developers and Web sites is to sell products, not to share a well-written story representing various cultures.

An authentic story worthy of being integrated into the curriculum should have the following characteristics:

- a compelling theme
- characters with personality
- a problem
- plot or stageable events
- quick resolution to the problem.

Fairytales are appropriate for PACE lessons. They are internationally known (e.g., Pinocchio, Red Riding Hood, Peter Pan, etc.) and find their origins in many different cultures. For example, Adair-Hauck and Cumo-Johanssen (1997) designed a PACE lesson that embedded the story of *Red Riding Hood* to teach the past tense (*passé composé* with *être*) to French II high school students. Although the students were familiar with this well-known story, follow-up questionnaires demonstrated that it was a challenge for them to listen and comprehend the story told orally in French and to participate in the story-based language learning activities. However, the students found the challenge well worth the effort, and much more interesting than a traditional approach to grammar (Adair-Hauck, 1993). Furthermore, the students were intrigued to learn how the French version of this universal fairytale differs from the American version. As they learned, the French version of *Red Riding Hood* has a different ending from the story they heard as children.

**Preparing and Delivering Stories.** Storytelling needs to be a social event. When students listen to stories, the quality of their listening is dramatically different when compared

to listening to an audio selection or viewing a videotape in the foreign language. For the latter, the students are "eavesdropping" on exchanges and social interactions occurring between *other* individuals (Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 1983). In other words, they are involved in secondhand listening rather than participatory listening. Storytelling, however, is a co-constructive listening experience, which Morgan and Rinvoluceri succinctly elucidate: "To be told a story by a live storyteller involves the learners in "I-Thou" listening where the listeners can directly influence the telling" (1983, p.2). Stated differently, through storytelling, both the teacher and learners influence the meaning-making event.

What are some participation strategies used by professional storytellers that keep their listeners engaged? First, the story you want to tell needs to become a familiar friend (Livo & Rietz, 1986). You may not need to memorize every word verbatim, but you do need to know exceptionally well the introduction, characters, main events, transition words that keep the story flowing, the resolution to the conflict, and the ending. Practicing storytelling in front of a mirror can be quite useful. A dress rehearsal for a friend or family member can inform you about which techniques are particularly valuable for helping students comprehend the story. For this dress rehearsal, it doesn't matter if your audience doesn't know your second language. If your illustrations, visuals, props, and facial expressions support the meaning of the story, even those who do not know the language should be able to comprehend some of the major events of the story and learn from your dress rehearsal.

The types of strategies you select to engage the listeners into the storytelling event will depend on the age, proficiency level, backgrounds of the learners, and the nature of the story. Some techniques, however, are essential for participatory storytelling. It is difficult to engage an audience if you are far away, so seating should be arranged so that everyone can see you clearly (a semicircle works well). Concentration, especially for elementary language learners, can be a difficult challenge; therefore, make sure that the story is not too long (many effective stories can be told in 5–10 minutes). If you have a favorite story that is longer but appropriate, divide the presentation step of the PACE lesson into two parts and introduce the second part of the story on day two.

Successful storytellers know how to engage the audience by using audience participatory techniques, such as hand motions (thumbs-up/thumbs-down for comprehension checks), character signs that learners hold up when the character is mentioned, cued repetitions of lines from the story, or silent dramatizations of parts of the story as it is being told (McWilliams, 2008). Visual aids will also hold learners' attention and assist in building comprehension. Most stories require at least 10–12 illustrations that depict the main characters and events. Oftentimes, artistic students are willing to create the illustrations and take pride in contributing to the class enterprise. Arranging the illustrations on the chalk runner or hanging them on a story "clothesline" will keep the story alive for the learners. A flannelgraph story can be useful to demonstrate connections between characters and events (McWilliams). Some teachers prefer to use puppets, prompts (such as costumes for different characters), and concrete objects to help learners understand the story. These visual aids are particularly important for elementary and intermediate-level classes. To be sure, students are not going to understand every word of the story, so using these storytelling comprehension-building strategies and participatory techniques will help to hold their attention and increase their level of understanding.

Finally, successful storytellers are skilled at incorporating kinesthetic cues that encourage the audience to concentrate and follow the events of the story. These cues may include eye contact, facial gestures, hand motions, and pantomime and/or body movements (e.g., standing one way for one character and another way for the narrator). Voice techniques, such as changing the tone of one's voice (high or low pitch), rhythm (fast or slow paced), and sound effects and silent pauses when appropriate will also help to hold learners' attention (Livo & Rietz, 1986).

To deepen learners' comprehension, the teacher may need to tell the story two or three times. For the second telling of the story, the teacher may want to use a story-cubing activity to focus learners' attention on the why-questions, or the who-what-where-when elements of the story (Cassidy & Hossler, 1992). If a third pass of the story is necessary, the teacher and learners together can retell the story by using the illustrations. Alternatively, the teacher may want to make smaller versions of the visuals and have students work in pairs or groups to recreate the storyline and retell the story. As stories are retold, the teacher should increase the level of student verbal or nonverbal participation in each telling of the story.

As a comprehension check, the teacher might play the "I Have: Who Has" game with students (Polette, 1991). This is an attentive listening comprehension game that can be constructed from any story and can be played as a whole-class activity or in groups as a final meaning-making activity. The teacher constructs a number of questions concerning the setting, character, major events, and final outcome of the story. Each student receives a card with one question and one answer to a different question written on it. The learner who has the starred card reads the first question. For "Le lion et la souris," the first question is "Where does the story take place?" The learner holding the card with the answer reads it and then provides the next question. By listening carefully, the learners should be able to respond correctly and thereby retell the story.

**Creating Extension Activities.** Creative extension activities are critical because they allow learners to use the new grammatical feature from the story in interpersonal communication, where they create their own thoughts in the foreign language. Extension activities also encourage learners to collaborate and cooperate in meaningful, interpersonal contexts. Although these activities may be challenging for learners, students will be able to express their own thoughts with more confidence, and their interpretive, interpersonal, and oral and written presentational communication will improve (Adair-Hauck, 1993).



Creative extension activities are critical because they allow learners to use the new grammatical feature from the story in interpersonal communication.

Extension activities often incorporate graphic organizers (such as story mapping, character mapping, or discussion webbing) to serve as anchoring devices to help learners organize their thoughts and ideas concerning the story. Vygotsky (1978) would argue that these graphic organizers may be viewed as mediational tools to organize learners' thinking, such as perception, attention, and memory. Story mapping and character mapping can be accomplished in pairs or in groups. During story mapping activities, learners work together to construct the principal elements of the story. The story map encourages learners to focus on the principal characters, problems, major events, and solutions to the problem. In character mapping activities, learners focus on a number of elements, such as the character's physical and intrinsic traits, and the character's good and bad actions. For sample PACE lessons and accompanying story-based activities in French, German, Japanese, and Spanish, see Appendices 7.2 to 7.6 on the *Teacher's Handbook* Web site.



[www.cengage.com/login](http://www.cengage.com/login)

At some point, the teacher will want to move the lesson from mere comprehension activities to activities that stimulate the learners' critical thinking skills. These activities encourage learners to analyze the events of the story and then to draw conclusions about the story. Alvermann (1991) suggests that critical thinking activities should be carried out collaboratively and cooperatively since "some of the best thinking results in a group's collaborative efforts" (p. 92).

*Discussion webbing* (Alvermann, 1991) is a critical thinking activity that can be developed for any story. Discussion webbing moves learners from what happened in the story to why it happened. For example, using "Le lion et la souris," the teacher can develop



a discussion webbing activity around the question “Should the mouse help the lion?” Discussion webbing encourages groups of learners to think about an even number of yes/no answers. Learners try to form a consensus on the best reason WHY the mouse should or should not help the lion. This encourages learners to look at both sides of an issue. Later, the groups can share their results from the discussion webbing activity in a class discussion. For sample discussion-webbing activities, see Appendix 7.1.13 on the *Teacher’s Handbook* Web site.



Discussion webbing moves learners from what happened in the story to why it happened.



Finally, the teacher may want to integrate an *intertextual* activity as a way to encourage learners to move beyond the mere recalling of events to higher critical thinking skills. During intertextual activities, learners working in pairs or groups analyze the components of stories by juxtapositioning two different texts or stories. Intertextual links can be made at various levels, by juxtaposing characters, content, plot development, style, and so on (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). A Venn diagram is often used as a graphic organizer (Christenbury & Kelly, 1983; Edwards, 1989; Redmond, 1994) to help learners analyze their thoughts (see Chapter 4). Note again that learners are encouraged to work in participatory groups during these intertextual activities, since a story-based approach emphasizes meaning-making and the *interpersonal* nature of language and literacy. For a sample intertextual activity, see Appendix 7.1.12 on the *Teacher’s Handbook* Web site.

Many teachers might wonder how learners with limited L2 resources will be able to participate in some of the more challenging story-based activities. Discussion webbing and intertextual activities tap into learners’ higher critical thinking skills; therefore, during these activities learners use their cognitive processes to concentrate on comparing and contrasting, analyzing, and synthesizing new information gleaned from the story with their prior background knowledge. In order to participate in these immersion-type activities, learners exploit a variety of compensation strategies to communicate their ideas in L2. As a result, their productive use of L2 varies. For example, some learners feel comfortable mixing L1 and L2, other learners seek assistance from the teacher or a more capable peer, and other learners feel more comfortable consulting a resource such as a dictionary (Adair-Hauck, 1996). The teacher creates a community that assists and supports learners in activities that they would be unable to do alone or unassisted. According to Vygotsky (1986), instruction (assisted performance) leads to development (unassisted performance): “Therefore the only good kind of instruction marches ahead of development and leads it. It must be aimed not so much at the ripe, but at the ripening functions” (p. 188).

To illustrate this point, one foreign language teacher who uses a story-based approach encourages her learners to negotiate meaning in L2 using discourse strategies such as comprehension checks and clarification requests. To do so, she decorates her room with large, colored, laminated signs highlighting discourse facilitators, such as: “*Répétez, s’il vous plaît*”; “*Comment?*”; “*Je n’ai pas saisi ça*”; “*Comment dit-on \_\_\_\_ en français?*”; “*Comment dirai-je \_\_\_\_?*”, and so on. She explained that in this way she provides assistance to her learners and, at the same time, decorates her classroom with the “curriculum.” ACT-FL’s standards-based assessment research project (Glisan, Adair-Hauck, & Gadbois, 2000) has revealed that many learners are not aware of and cannot use discourse compensation strategies, which, in turn, deters their performance on standards-based interpersonal tasks. Therefore, we need to integrate these discourse facilitators and compensation strategies into a standards-based curriculum early in the language learning sequence.

**PACE and the Accuracy Issue.** Elementary/intermediate level learners certainly will make grammatical errors while participating in extension activities, even with the new

grammatical feature of the lesson. As learners work in groups, the teacher needs to observe the various groups and provide assistance (e.g., requisite vocabulary, verb tense, etc.) when necessary. But in many instances, learners will be capable of expressing their opinions regarding the events/outcomes of the story, even if those opinions are at times not grammatically perfect. Frustration on the part of the teacher and/or learners will be reduced if the teacher places an emphasis on *meaning-making* or *sense-making* as learners try to create and construct meaning during these interpersonal and socially mediated activities.

As a debriefing activity after the extension activities, the teacher may want to focus attention on some common or frequently made errors or remind the students of what they had discussed in the co-construction phase of the lesson. It is important to note that during interactions between native and nonnative speakers in the world outside of the classroom, error correction tends to be limited to errors regarding meaning, including vocabulary choice, rather than on pronunciation and grammar. Errors that do not interfere with meaning tend to be overlooked by native speakers (Lightbown & Spada, 2003). Unfortunately, in many formal second language classroom settings, accuracy has precedence over meaningful communication, and, therefore, errors are frequently corrected. Too much error correction can stifle learner motivation (Hadley, 2001).

A collaborative approach to error correction is advantageous, since it includes the learners in the learning process. For example, during the debriefing session, the teacher can remind learners that errors are a natural part of language development (Lightbown & Spada, 2003). In the natural second language setting, errors regarding meaning would prompt a native speaker to correct or to ask for clarification.

Learners enjoy collaborating with the teacher and investigating which of their mistakes cause misunderstanding of the message (Adair-Hauck, 1995; Vavra, 1996). Using an overhead or LCD projector, the teacher can show learners examples of contextualized mistakes and errors in meaningful exchanges with longer stretches of discourse.

Another strategy that encourages learners to pay attention to accuracy is to show elementary or intermediate level students a sample oral interview in which students from previous years participated. This interview could be one that had been done at the end of the year as a summative assessment. Before playing the interview, the teacher could briefly discuss the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Speaking* (1999) for novice, intermediate, and advanced level speakers. This explanation may have to be conducted in L1, depending on the level of the learners. Students could then identify the functions that they see and they could identify the structures that the interviewee needs to work on in order to improve. Another idea is to show an actual OPI (to the extent that one may be available) and have learners discuss with their teacher why the interviewee is at a particular proficiency level and which accuracy structures the interviewee needs to work on in order to receive a higher rating. Furthermore, the class can discuss what language functions or tasks the interviewee was able to carry out during the interview. In this way, the teacher crystallizes the importance of the functions and grammatical structures embedded in the curriculum. As Christenbury (1996) succinctly explains, "Grammar and usage cannot be taught effectively if students see no real need for it and if teachers cannot persuade them to see the need" (p. 12).

## Moving to Independent Practice

At some point, the teacher will want learners to practice the target language independently. Ideally, group activities or working together on an interpersonal level will have prepared learners to function independently (Vygotsky, 1978). As an independent extension activity, the teacher may ask learners to create a different ending to the story.

Learners may also use the story mapping technique to create their own stories. A number of foreign language teachers have reported that learners enjoy creating humorous stories or "spoofs" related to the story in class. As a final presentational activity, learners can share their stories either with their class or with other members of the community (e.g., younger learners in the district, target culture student exchange groups).

## Voices of the Learners

Before concluding, one should acknowledge the thoughts and opinions of learners regarding story-based language learning activities for foreign language learners. Adair-Hauck (1993) conducted a three-month, classroom-based research project using a story-based approach to teach intermediate level French to a class of 20 learners ranging from 15 to 16 years of age. At the end of the project, learners' responses were overwhelmingly positive. For example, when asked, "Was it easier to learn French by listening to stories?" 90% of the learners answered "yes," one learner answered "no," and one learner answered "yes" and "no." Learners' qualitative responses to the question "What did you like most about the storytelling activities?" were particularly enlightening. One perceptive learner commented, "I liked learning with pictures and props. That way, if there was something I didn't understand, then I knew what it was." Another learner responded, "I liked the storytelling activities because they had a good effect. You seem to remember things better if you have something to do with the words you are learning." Finally, one learner made this comment regarding a positive, affective climate: "I liked the fact that it gets the class into the story and it makes it more fun. I think I learn better when I enjoy the class."

## TEACH AND REFLECT . . . . .

### NCATE

#### EPISODE ONE

##### Examining Grammar Presentations in Textbooks

ACTFL/NCATE 3.a. Understanding Language Acquisition and Creating a Supportive Classroom; 3.b. Developing Instructional Practices that Reflect Language Outcomes and Learner Diversity; 4.c. Selecting and Designing Instructional Materials.

TESOL/NCATE: 1.b. Candidates Understand and Apply Theories and Research of Language Acquisition and Development to Support Their ESOL Students' Learning; 3.a. Planning for Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction; 3.b. Managing and Implementing Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction; and 3.c. Using Resources Effectively in ESL and Content Instruction.

Examine at least two textbooks in the target language. Decide whether the textbooks use a deductive or inductive approach to grammar explanation. To do so, answer the following questions for each textbook:

1. Does the textbook offer some form of grammatical analysis? If so, does the textbook advocate a deductive or inductive approach to grammar explanation?
2. When is the teacher supposed to focus the learners' attention on form or on grammatical structures—at the beginning of the chapter, the middle, the end, or not at all?
3. Analyze the role assigned to the learner regarding grammar explanations. Is the learner a passive listener during the explanation? Is the learner supposed to be an active hypothesizer? Is the learner supposed to hypothesize alone or in collaboration with others?